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CHILE INFORMED QUESTION PAPER--MILITARY

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CHILE INFORMED QUESTION PAPER--MILITARY

Overview

Chile's Armed Forces are an effective and professional organization. Approximately 87,000 men and women serve in the Army, Air Force, Navy (including Marine and Coast Guard) as well as the paramilitary police force--the Caribonari--and Investigative Police. The role of the armed forces, as defined in the constitution, is to protect the country and guarantee "institutional" order. This role extends to the defense of national institutions against internal as well as external threats.¹ The military's role in Chilean government continues to transition from the authoritarian regime of General Augusto Pinochet, which lasted from 1973 until 1990, to greater civilian authority. Significantly, the current Minister of Defense, Michelle Bachelet, is the daughter of a Chilean Air Force (AFCh) general who lost his life while jailed for sedition by Pinochet. The Chilean people and armed forces have been conflicted over Pinochet's legacy—a legacy of extreme human rights abuses combined with a liberal economic policy which brought prosperity to the country. Pinochet's extradition from Great Britain, trial and subsequent finding of mental incapacity followed by virtual public disappearance appear to have ended his influence on the country and demonstrate a nearly complete democratic transition.

External threats are minimal. Disputes with neighboring Peru, Bolivia and Argentina have been relegated to diplomatic solutions by a combination of recognized superior military strength and regional economic integration.

Internally, Chile also faces little threat; however, militants from the Mapuche indigenous population in the south-central region of the country have become more active

¹ Jane's SENTINEL, Issue 12 – 2003, p232.

in recent years, blocking roads, burning forests and rioting. Some small insurgent groups may exist on the fringes, left over from the Pinochet era. Finally, illegal immigration, drugs, and crime, while considerably less evident than in most countries, appear to be an increasing problem.²

Civil-Military Relations

Background. In 1973, a military junta led by General Augusto Pinoche Ugarte, allegedly supported by the United States, overthrew the democratically elected government of Marxist-socialist President Salvadore Allende. Pinochet maintained power, first as supreme chief of state and later as president, until 1988 when Chilean voters elected an opposition candidate. Pinochet continued as chief of the armed forces until his retirement in 1998. In 1980, the government instituted a new Constitution which “enshrined” the relationship between the armed forces and the executive branch of the government, establishing the Council of National Security, made up of eight members, four military--the heads of the army, navy, air force and police--and four civilian--the presidents of the republic, Senate and Supreme Court, and the comptroller general. In this forum the military is constitutionally provided an opportunity to notify civilian authorities of potential conflicts between military and civilian interests, thereby preventing military intervention in the government.³ Additionally, the Constitution does not empower the government to appoint or dismiss defense chiefs.

Questions: How does the Chilean military define its role in the government? What is the “roadmap” for a successful (promotion to Flag/General Officer) officer? Are

² Compiled from EIU, Janes, Lexis-Nexis, and Periscope documents.

³ Lexis-Nexis, p 3; Janes, p 219.

courses taught on civil-military relations/officership at the military academies or in professional military education?

External Threats

Background. Chile is strategically located relative to sea lanes between the Atlantic and Pacific (Straits of Magellan, Beagle Channel, Drake Passage). Its unique geography and topography create both defensive advantages and difficulties. The center of the nation is well insulated from overland threats by both distance and the Andes mountain range; however, its extremities are vulnerable due to its long, narrow shape which also invites, at least theoretically, possible air attack from Argentina.⁴ Chile has had historical disputes with all its neighbors, including fighting and winning a war against Bolivia and Peru in 1884 which increased Chile's landmass by a third at their expense. Prior to Argentina's invasion of the Falkland Islands in 1982, Chile shared intelligence with the UK.⁵ More recently, Chile and Argentina faced off over the Beagle Straits, eventually resolving their differences diplomatically. Current disputes with its neighbors include Bolivian desire for access to the Pacific (lost during the war) and disputes over Rio Lauca water rights.⁶ Relations with Peru have cooled as a result of Peruvian pressures to revise the maritime limits agreed by the two countries in 1952.⁷ Chilean military modernization efforts, particularly its recent agreement to acquire US F-16s, evoked some regional concern, particularly from Peru. Some senior Chilean officers harbor ill feelings towards the United States held over from implementation of the Kennedy Amendment, which prevented all military sales to Chile for over two decades during the Pinochet era.

⁴ Janes, p206.

⁵ Janes, p 226

⁶ For additional information on the Rio Lauca water rights dispute, see "The Rio Lauca: Dispute over an International River," by Martin Ira Glassner, in *Geographical Review*: Vol. 60, No.2, pp 192-207.

⁷ EIU, p 6.

Chile's territorial claim in Antarctica (Chilean Antarctic Territory) partially overlaps Argentine and British claims.

Questions: Define Chile's immediate and long-term threat environment. What measures is Chile taking to ensure weapons acquisitions and force modernization are not seen as threatening by its neighbors? Does Chile foresee a role for the United States in reducing the likelihood of potential conflict? In what areas would Chile like to see improvements in US-Chilean military relations?

Internal Threats

Background. The Chilean Carbineros are an exceptionally professional force, one of the few regional police agencies genuinely capable of confronting modern transnational security problems related to drugs and other forms of criminal activity.⁸ Violent street crime is well below regional levels and less common than in most developed countries. Drug abuse and prostitution, however, are on the rise.⁹

Chile's insurgency problems are minimal, having largely subsided since the end of military rule. However, the Frente Patriotico Manuel Rodriguez (FPMR), a Maoist revolutionary group formed in the 1980s and linked to a kidnapping in Brazil and possibly active in Colombia, appears to still be active.¹⁰ The FPMR conducted attacks against the US Embassy and its personnel in 1990 and '91. The Lautaro Youth Movement (MJL), also known as the Lautaro faction of the United Popular Action Movement (MAPU/L) or Lautoro Popular Rebel Froces (FRPL), is a violent, anti-USA, extremist group committed to overthrowing the Chilean government. Active in the late 1980s, the MJL conducted assassinations, bank robberies, arson attacks and bombings in

⁸ Janes, p 205.

⁹ Janes, p 206.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Santiago and to a lesser extent throughout Chile. The Chilean government nearly eliminated the Lautaro terrorist organization in 1994, capturing its founder and leader, Guillermo Ossandon. It is believed a second round of arrests against second-tier leaders destroyed the organization. Finally, the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) consists of approximately 500 personnel, but does not maintain heavy weaponry and is not considered a significant threat.¹¹

The most significant internal security concern is the ongoing campaign by Mapuche indigenous community militants to disrupt forestry operations in Chile's central-south region. Activists, labeled "terrorists" by some, burn native forests and industrial plantations, sabotage machinery and block roads. Battles with riot police occur regularly and often result in arrests and injuries. The government seeks a political solution through law enforcement and social programs designed to address the root causes--rural poverty and unmet land claims.¹²

Questions: How is the relationship between the Carbinero and other military departments maintained? What special training is involved? Are there guidelines established which differentiate between law enforcement and military responsibilities? How is intelligence shared and are there limits between law enforcement and military sharing of information? Does Chile recognize a link between drug trafficking and terrorism? How does Chile enforce border control against illegal immigration? Are there active insurrectionist movements in Chile, and if so, what strategies have been effective in combating them? Does the

¹¹ Periscope, Overview, p 2.

¹² Janes, p 206.

Carbinero attribute its exceptional record on crime enforcement to any particular programs or techniques?

Modernization

Background. The armed forces are in the middle of a modernization program encompassing everything from new hardware procurement to the scrapping of compulsory military service.¹³ The Chilean Air Force (AFCh) recently contracted with Lockheed Martin for 10 F-16 fighters and associated support. The Navy's (La Armada de Chile) focus is on giving the Navy true blue water capability. Constrained financing, however, is forcing selection of limited but well-defined programs.¹⁴ In 1997, Chile signed a contract for two Franco-Spanish Scorpene diesel attack submarines which will replace two Oberon-class subs.¹⁵ The government is currently negotiating with Lockheed-Martin for improvement to its frigate force.

Service in the Chilean Armed Forces is by conscription for men aged 19-45. Women may volunteer for service. Conscripts serve a period of one year in the Army and Air Force, and 21 months in the Navy. Draftees number 27,000 of an Army strength of 51,000; 2100 of 24,000 seamen; and 1500 of 12,000 airmen. The Army is the only Chilean service to maintain a permanent trained reserve force—approximately 50,000.¹⁶

Questions: What actions is the Chilean military taking to modernize its forces? Are these efforts also reflected in doctrinal changes? What roles are women taking in

¹³ Ibid, p 207.

¹⁴ Periscope, Navy, p. 1.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 5.

¹⁶ Ibid, Armed Forces Structure, p. 2.

the military? Are any challenges anticipated in the transition to an all-volunteer force? Are there programs in place to maintain reserve readiness?

Budget

Background. Chile spends more on defense, as a percentage of GDP, than any other South American country. The 1980 Constitution includes a military budget provision, the “Copper Law,” which requires Chile to use 10 per cent of its copper export sales for weapons acquisitions. This provision was designed to protect the budget against potential mismanagement of the economy by civilian governments; however, in recent years its effect has been to actually limit acquisition budgets. Copper exports have not grown at the same rate as the economy and proceeds are distributed evenly between the three armed forces, despite more urgent and expensive navy and air force requirements vice the army.¹⁷

Questions: Will the Copper Law continue as the basis for establishing the military budget or do you anticipate change? How are funding disputes between the services mitigated?

Weapons Acquisition

Background. President Lagos faced dissension from his own Socialist Party when he confirmed, in January 2002, the purchase of 10 new F-16 aircraft from the US at an estimated cost of US \$600 million. Lagos scrapped plans to build four new frigates to placate domestic critics. Washington Democrats worried the US’ first major Latin American arms sale in over a decade could trigger a regional arms race. Neighboring

¹⁷ Janes, p. 207.

governments also expressed concern, but the Chilean defense minister, Michelle Bachelet, played down the purchase as purely replacement of obsolete equipment.¹⁸

Question: In light of recent and pending military sales between the US and Chile, are there measures either nation could/should take to improve the arms sales process?

Terrorism

Background. Chile is co-operating closely with the US against terrorism. Immigration officials detained two Iraqis attempting to enter the country on false passports shortly after 11 September 2001. Police deactivated a letter bomb sent to the US embassy, although they believe it was sent by a local security company operator looking to improve business. Defense ministers from 34 countries of the western hemisphere met in Santiago in mid-November 2002. Terrorism and regional co-operation topped the agenda.¹⁹

Questions: What, if any, new measures has Chile taken to combat international terrorism? Are there areas where the US could work more effectively with Chile?

Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)

Background. Chile, as a highly developed country, is a potential nuclear power and could probably develop nuclear weapons within five to 10 years; considerably less if the national security situation warranted. Chile's belated signature of the Latin American Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty may be seen in the light of similar actions by Argentina and Brazil, both countries with relatively well-developed nuclear weapons programs.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 230.

The production of biological and chemical weapons would present little problem to Chilean industry. No covert programs are known to exist.²⁰

Questions: In light of Argentine and Brazilian nuclear weapons potential, does Chile foresee any requirement for future WMD development? What is the Chilean reaction to US development of a National Missile Defense system? Is there a desire/requirement for theater missile defense in Chile?

²⁰ Ibid, p. 234.

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